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# U.S. Says Soviets Shot Down Airliner

By A. D. Horne  
Washington Post Foreign Service

A missile fired by a Soviet jet fighter downed a Korean Air Lines jet with 269 persons aboard near the Soviet island of Sakhalin Wednesday, American officials charged yesterday, calling on Moscow to explain "this appalling act."

The Boeing 747, whose passengers included Rep. Larry McDonald (D-Ga.) among an estimated 30 or more Americans, apparently plunged into the Sea of Japan, with no sign of any survivors. The plane went down early Thursday morning, Tokyo time, which was Wednesday afternoon here.

Soviet officials, facing mounting international outrage, did not acknowledge downing the plane. A brief statement issued in Moscow by the official Tass news agency said only that Soviet fighter planes had tried to guide "an unidentified plane" that twice "violated the air space of the U.S.S.R.," but that "the intruder plane did not react to the signals and warnings from the Soviet fighters and continued its flight in the direction of the Sea of Japan."

The Soviets later reported, in a message delivered to the State Department, that search parties had found signs of a possible crash in the area of Moneron Island, west of Sakhalin.

The plane, on a flight from New York to Seoul with a refueling stop in Anchorage, Alaska, apparently wandered far north of its scheduled flight path, which would have passed south of the Kuril Islands and the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido.

Secretary of State George P. Shultz said the plane "strayed into Soviet airspace over the Kamchatka Peninsula and over the Sea of Okhotsk and over the Sakhalin Island." Shultz said that "at least eight fighters" were scrambled to intercept the airliner, and that the fighter that shot it down "was close enough for a visual inspection of the aircraft."

But Shultz said there was no direct radio contact be-

tween the airliner and the Soviet planes. "We can see no explanation whatever for shooting down an unarmed commercial airliner," Shultz said.

In Santa Barbara, Calif., White House spokesman Larry Speakes announced that President Reagan was returning to Washington today, a day earlier than planned, for a meeting with his national security advisers.

Late yesterday, State Department spokesman John Hughes said Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko had sent Shultz a message that was "almost verbatim" the Tass statement. Hughes said the Soviet Embassy was

told that Gromyko's message was "totally inadequate" as an explanation.

Other nations with citizens aboard the downed plane expressed outrage. According to Korean Air Lines, the majority of the passengers were South Koreans, but there were also Japanese, Taiwanese, Filipinos, Thais, Canadians and persons of other nationalities aboard.

In Tokyo, Japanese Foreign Minister Shintaro Abe said that if the airliner had been shot down by Soviet planes, it was "very regrettable." Soviet Ambassador Vladimir Pavlov was summoned to the Foreign Ministry for an explanation.

In Ottawa, Canadian Minister of State Jean-Luc Pepin said that Soviet Embassy Charge d'Affaires Alexander Novikov cautioned him, "Planes go down without being shot down." Last night, Deputy Prime Minister Allan J. MacEachen said he was "very offended" by the Soviet reaction.

In Seoul, South Korean President Chun Doo Hwan met twice with his Cabinet during the day, and later issued a statement accusing the Soviet Union of "a barbarous act" and demanding a Soviet apology. South Korea has no diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union—a strong supporter of its rival, North Korea.

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